



P.O. Box 4173 Glendale CA 91202
www.GlendaleHistorical.org

May 1, 2022

Re: Agenda Item 7a, an Ordinance for the Lease of the Alex Theatre

Dear Mayor Kassakhian and Members of the Glendale City Council:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the lease agreement for one of the most important historic buildings in Glendale and historic theaters in southern California.

We want to express the following concerns and urge you to make sure the plans for the lease of the theater address them.

1. Concern: Glendale Arts has accumulated files and items on the Alex Theatre from 1991-2021. We have been unable to get information on where these materials will be stored and maintained. Careful cataloging and sharing with TGHS and other stakeholders where the materials are located and how they can be accessed is critical for institutional history. People come and go, but the records need to be available and known. Two examples of researchers accessing historic records just recently are in 2019, for Eric Lynxwiler's program at the Alex about S. Charles Lee, and in 2020 for Mike Hume's program about the Alex presented to the Los Angeles Historic Theatres Foundation. Ongoing uses include researching and presenting tours of the Alex.

TGHS asks the City to acquire, maintain, and make available to the staff and members of the public copies of Glendale Arts' records pertaining to the Alex Theatre between 1991 and 2021 (minutes, committee meeting documentation regarding work done on the building, etc.).

2. Concern: In regard to tenant alterations, the Lease document correctly states that the theatre building must be maintained in accordance with the plans, specifications, and drawings approved by the Landlord to be consistent with the Theatre's 1925 design and that any alterations must conform with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, but there

The Glendale Historical Society (TGHS) advocates for the preservation of important Glendale landmarks, supports maintaining the historic character of Glendale's neighborhoods, educates the public about and engages the community in celebrating and preserving Glendale's history and architectural heritage, and operates the Doctors House Museum. TGHS is a tax-exempt, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization, and donations to TGHS are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

is no reference to the 1940 marquee, spire and ticket kiosk, which were restored to their 1940 condition and must be maintained consistent with that date.

TGHS urges the City to add a sentence under Article 11 of the agreement that states that any alterations to the marquee, spire, and ticket kiosk must be consistent with their 1940 design.

3. Concern: Included in the packet to be approved on May 3rd, is a "City Theatre Capital Improvement Program and Schedule" which was worked out by the City and SAS without involvement of the City's Historic Preservation Planner and the City's Historic Preservation Commission.

TGHS asks the City to include in the contract the requirements that SAS work closely with the City's Historic Preservation Planner and that a historic preservation consultant selected by the City be hired to ensure that any changes/improvements/modernizations to the theater are compatible with the City's multi-million-dollar rehabilitation of the Alex in the early 1990s. Areas of particular concern listed on the Capital Improvement Program and Schedule in the packet are the following:

a. Spire refurbishment/LED Conversion (the neon is a character-defining feature of the historic sign and should not be converted to LED).

b. General beautification and modernization: The contract should state that changes to the theatre building must follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and *must be consistent with the 1925 Theatre building as determined appropriate by the City's historic preservation planner and a historic preservation consultant.*

c. Flooring in audience areas: The contract should state that changes to the theatre building must follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and *must be consistent with the 1925 Theatre building as determined appropriate by the City's historic preservation planner and a historic preservation consultant.*

4. Concern: In the early days of fundraising before, during, and after the rehabilitation of the Alex, the Alex Regional Theatre Board had several fundraising campaigns (seat naming and others). Those Charter donors were promised recognition of their contributions in perpetuity. The Alex Development Director had two very attractive donor boards created which were mounted on either side of the lobby on the freestanding columns which recognized the donors who made the rehabilitation of the theatre possible. Glendale Arts removed but did not replace those donor boards from the Alex lobby several years ago. Given that the Charter Donors were promised recognition for their donations in perpetu-

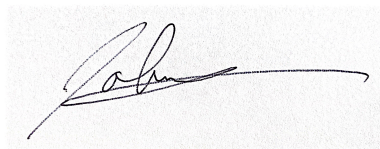
ity in the original donor materials, it seems like a major oversight that they have gone unrecognized for so many years.

TGHS urges the City to acquire the donor files from Glendale Arts. Said files should be used to create new donor boards to recognize the Charter Donors who made the rehabilitation of the Alex Theatre in the early 1990s possible. These donors are an important piece of Alex history.

Please see below for additional background on the Alex and rehabilitation work.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Schwab-Sims", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John Schwab-Sims
VP Preservation
The Glendale Historical Society

cc: Aram Adjemian, City Clerk
Roubik Golanian, City Manager
Bradley Calvert, Assistant Director of Community Development
Jay Platt, Senior Urban Designer
Steve Hunt, President, The Glendale Historical Society

Additional background on the Alex:

1925: Alex built in Greek and Egyptian design with atmospheric auditorium, murals on the sidewalls, and urns in the niches on either side of the proscenium

1940: Art Deco marquee and tower, ticket kiosk, and terrazzo floor (at street and under portico) added by architect S. Charles Lee

1948: Following a backstage fire, the theatre operators closed the theatre for a few weeks and redecorated (changed carpet, changed seat standards, raised sidewalls in auditorium covering original murals and adding new murals, added small murals in the lobby, added swag curtains at proscenium, replaced urns in niches on either side of proscenium with statues of stylized lions, replaced all light fixtures).

1990s: When the City of Glendale decided to rehabilitate the Alex, they hired Peyton Hall, with the John Ash Group, as the historic preservation consultant to advise and work with the two project architects Leon Sugarman and Richard McCann. The determination was made to restore the theatre building itself (both inside and out) to its 1925 appearance and the majority of the 1948 changes were removed, including the stylized lion statues which were kept and used as bookends to the history wall in the foyer. The original urns were replicated based on historic photographs and put in the niches on either side of the proscenium. The only 1948 additions that were retained were the light fixtures and seat standards because no photos existed of the original light fixtures or seat standards. As part of the rehabilitation, it was also determined to restore the marquee and tower, ticket kiosk (including the neon on all three), and terrazzo floor to their original 1940 appearance, though the canopy connected to the tower and marquee was removed. The forecourt was redesigned as a contemporary space which reflected neither period.